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TAGS: PREL PGOV CH FR GM JA UK SU

SUBJECT: BEIJING-BASED G-5 CHIEFS OF MISSION ON POISONED DUMPLINGS, EAST CHINA SEA, VISITORS, ETC.

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) At the February 29 bi-weekly G-5 Beijing-based Chiefs of Mission gathering, Japanese DCM Kunio UMEDA described the downturn in Sino-Japanese bilateral relations in the wake of the poisoned dumpling scandal. China and Japan are now moving towards consensus on East China Sea oil issues. China and Japan also recently held a high-level military dialogue. French Ambassador Ladsous said the outcry resulting from a case of rough police treatment of a pair of Chinese tourists in France highlights rising Chinese nationalism. Ladsous was impressed by Chinese Special Envoy for Darfur Liu Guijin, calling him "candid and knowledgeable." The German Embassy will receive several high-level visitors in the upcoming months, including a Bundestag visit to Tibet. End Summary.

Participants

¶2. (C) French Ambassador Herve Ladsous hosted German Ambassador Dr. Michael Schaefer, Japanese DCM Kunio Umeda and the Ambassador November 2 for the bi-weekly G-5 gathering of Beijing-based Chiefs of Mission. Because of British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs David Milliband's

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visit to China, the UK Embassy did not send a representative to the meeting.

Poisoned Dumplings Causing Bilateral Strife

¶3. (C) Japanese DCM Kunio Umeda said the recent poisoned dumplings scandal is seriously damaging Japan's relationship with China. The Japanese are distributing fact sheets on the incident that give details of the Japanese investigation into the pesticides found in Chinese dumplings exported to Japan. Chinese police insist that a "comprehensive and thorough investigation" has revealed "no credible evidence" that the dumplings were laced with insecticide in China, despite the evidence Japan has provided. Umeda described Chinese propaganda on the issue as a "well-organized counterattack" designed to avoid responsibility or liability. Umeda said he believes the Communist Party's Organization Department is directing the campaign. The lack of Chinese confidence-building measures has caused many Japanese consumers to begin avoiding Chinese-made dumplings. Umeda reported that the conflict over the dumplings has "poisoned the atmosphere" in bilateral relations.

## East China Sea: Strategic Dialogue

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¶ 14. (C) Japan and China held a Vice Foreign Minister-level strategic dialogue February 22-23, partly to lay the ground work for a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao. Deputy Foreign Minister Yabunaka Mitoji headed the Japanese delegation and met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi. China chose early May for Hu's visit to Japan, which was the latest time offered by Japan. This later date will allow the most time for the dumplings issue to fade, as well as give the two sides more time to work through issues related to oil exploration in the East China Sea. Umeda said that the two sides have reached agreement on the issue, but are awaiting political approval on both sides. As such, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi will travel to Japan March 24-25, in advance of Hu Jintao's visit. Umeda further noted that both sides are having difficulty reaching agreement on joint oil development in the East China Sea because of the "deteriorating atmosphere" of the bilateral relationship caused by the poisoned dumplings.

## Sino-Japanese Mil-to-Mil Dialogue

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¶ 15. (C) The Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Office of the Japanese Self Defense Force Saito Takashi met his PLA counterpart, Chief of Staff Chen Bingde, in Beijing. Umeda said that Chen Bingde noted to the Japanese that if Taiwan President Chen Shuibian declares independence, China will respond militarily. Chen reportedly also said that "Taiwan supported by the United States is stronger than China." Umeda reported that Chen urged the Japanese to move past historical problems with China, in the same way that Japan has moved on from the U.S. detonation of a nuclear device over Hiroshima. Chen noted that the PLA budget is USD 45 billion. Chen asked why Taiwan is included in Japan's Theater Military Defense (TMD), to which Saito responded that Taiwan is, in fact, not a part of Japan's TMD.

## German High-Level Visitors

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¶ 16. (C) German Ambassador Dr. Michael Schaefer reported that upcoming German visitors to China include a large trade delegation in April, two groups from the German Bundestag in May and a delegation from the Bundestag's Foreign Relations Committee on June 7 or 8. The Foreign Relations Committee is planning to travel to Tibet, a sensitive area given the downturn in Sino-German relations following German Chancellor Merkel's meeting with the Dalai Lama September 23, 2007.

## French Police Brutality Angers Some Chinese

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¶ 17. (C) French Ambassador Herve Ladsous reported that two Chinese tourists in Paris were handled roughly by the police after being arrested for allegedly passing counterfeit money. The money was later established to be genuine. Ladsous has had to apologize personally at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the incident and has received several thousand emails on the incident, which he takes as a sign of China's rising nationalism.

## French High-Level Visitors

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¶ 18. (C) Former French Presidents Valery Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Chirac and former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin will visit China the week of April 21. French Minister of Culture Christine Albanel will visit April 3 to launch a cultural festival, including an exhibition on Napoleon from the Louvre that will be displayed in the Forbidden City. As part of the cultural festival, the last program of the season to be held in the National Theater will be a French Opera. In May, the French will hold consultations with China on

Latin America. The French MFA Director of Strategic Affairs will visit Beijing in May to hold a regular consultation on disarmament, one session of which will be dedicated to counterterrorism. France and China will also hold an economic dialogue in May. On May 15, the Political Directors of the EU Troika will meet Chinese counterparts in Beijing. In June, Dai Bingguo and French Diplomatic Advisor to the President Jean-David Levitte will hold a strategic dialogue.

French Ambassador on Liu Guijin: Candid and Knowledgeable

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¶ 9. (C) Chinese Special Envoy for Darfur Liu Guijin will transit Paris while returning to China from his current trip to Sudan and Chad. During his transit, he will meet with French President Sarkozy at the Elysee. Ladsous described Liu Guijin as "good to work with, candid, direct and knowledgeable." Liu had previously asked Ladsous why the French had not yet expelled Darfurian rebel leader Abdul Wahid Nur, the leader of the Sudanese Liberation Movement, from his home in Paris despite Nur's residence permit having expired. Liu's knowledge that Nur's residence permit had expired impressed Ladsous.

An Undiplomatic Reception at the Tibetology Center

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¶ 10. (C) New MFA Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Wu Hongbo recently hosted a reception for all European Chiefs of Mission. His choice of venue for the event, the Tibetology Research Center, angered some of the Europeans. German Ambassador Schaefer did not attend the event. French Ambassador Ladsous did attend, using the event as an opportunity to raise the issue of religious freedom with AFM Wu. The Dalai Lama will visit France and Germany in August.

Other Issues

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¶ 11. (C) French Ambassador Ladsous recently returned from a trip to Guangzhou. He noted that the current provincial leadership understands that current economic policies in Guangdong are unsustainable and economic reform is necessary. Also, the French recently opened a new Consulate General,

their sixth, in Shenyang.

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